

1 Analysis of Journalism Standards in Citizen Journalism Content: A Case of Tanzania 2 Blogs

3

4 ABSTRACT

5 In the early 2000s, Tanzania saw the rise of social media, which led to a proliferation of online
6 media initiatives. Unfortunately, many of these initiatives often disregarded journalistic
7 principles and ethics, resulting in the spread of distorted news. To protect the public from
8 inappropriate content, the Content Committee of the Tanzania Communications Regulatory
9 Authority (TCRA-CC) oversees and regulates electronic media through “The Electronic and
10 Postal Communications (Online Content) (Amendment) Regulations, 2022.” However, the field
11 of scientific research in Tanzania is yet to fully explore the adherence of online media,
12 particularly blogs, to the ethics and principles of journalism. This study, with its three specific
13 objectives, presents a novel approach by investigating the news values of citizen journalism
14 about professional journalism standards, assessing citizen journalism content against the
15 professional journalism code of ethics, and examining the language used in citizen journalism in
16 relation to the professional journalism code of ethics. This study employs content analysis of 10
17 blogs and incorporates interviews with five respondents to gather insights on the experience of
18 using blogs. The study, which is of significant importance to the field of journalism, employed a
19 purposive sampling method to select blog accounts pertinent to news, along with five
20 respondents possessing experience in applying blogs within journalism practices. The study
21 employs content analysis and interviews to obtain information regarding news values and ethics
22 in journalism. The study's results indicate that all 10 blogs comply with the principles and ethics
23 of journalism. In terms of language, the blogs employ a combination of Swahili and English,
24 particularly in advertisements. The research indicates that bloggers have pursued journalism
25 education and engaged academic editors to ensure compliance with the Electronic and Postal
26 Communications (Online Content) (Amendment) Regulations, 2022. The study concluded that
27 blogs do not violate media values and ethics within citizen journalism; instead, they serve as a
28 significant new media platform. They play a crucial role in addressing the longstanding
29 information deficit in rural development, a key area that demands our attention. The study
30 recommends that journalism schools enhance education on new media to equip more young
31 individuals with skills for self-employment in the news sector, stimulating national development
32 and promoting online media.

33 Key words: *blogs, media ethics, news values, online contents, Tanzania*

34 INTRODUCTION

35 Citizen journalism emerged in the late 1990s as individuals in developed and developing nations
36 gained internet connectivity. Scholars such as Wall (2015, pp. 797-813) and Aboub (2015)
37 considered the phenomenon of networking as an overarching concept encompassing both blogs
38 and institutional practices. In Jamaica, for example, the television station in its program known
39 as ‘I Watch report’ gave an opportunity to viewers to send variety of events or activities. Viewer

40 did it within their location, personal website or social network such as Facebook, and Twitter. In
41 Jamaica national wide news network have made a regular part as solicit views from listeners and
42 incorporate those views in their programs. Some researchers keep on debating that citizen
43 journalism did not exist before the age of internet thus justifying the phenomena grew within the
44 age of internet (Barnes, 2017). This has attracted different scholars on the debate on the subject
45 matter. To date, the debate goes on. Allan (2013) argues that citizen journalism originated during
46 the tsunami in the South Eastern Asia in December 2004 when citizen started taking the pictures
47 and the videos of the incidents as practicing journalism at the scene ordinary citizens started
48 engaged themselves into journalistic activities using digital technologies. These events, became
49 the basis of the evidence of the existing citizen journalism. Various studies indicated that the
50 citizen's journalism that makes the transit information go around the globe within seconds.
51 Smudde (2005) argued that certainly no consensus exist as to how much journalism will be
52 changed by the internet but no doubt that change is evident in the future. Newspaper publishers
53 and other media managers worry about how they can fit into the changing scene and still prosper
54 concerned journalists wonder as well as how the traditional values and standards of good
55 journalism can survive in the turbulent world of the internet. According to Allan & Thorsen
56 (2009), citizen journalism emerged soon after the revolution of technology, the latest media
57 technologies, social networks, media-sharing websites and the increasing presence of smartphone
58 users in searching for information in social media than from the mainstream media. Often citizen
59 journalism characterized by the emergence of low-cost equipment and ease of access to online
60 media distribution, these technological developments helped revolutionize how ordinary citizens
61 engage with news and information.

62 **Citizen Journalism and Objectivity**

63 A contentious discussion regarding the objectivity of professional journalism is also seen in the
64 realm of new media. Wien's 2006 study indicates that journalistic objectivity should be centred
65 on principles like 'truth' and 'reality', with the latter being inseparable from the former. According
66 to Alter (2019), the traditional view of journalism is described as the "professional objective
67 model," in which journalists are expected to deliver unbiased facts entirely neutrally. Mainstream
68 journalism is characterised by certain professional norms that involve specific news gathering
69 and construction techniques. A typical journalist for a significant publication strives for
70 impartiality, maintains a detached stance in relation to their subject, obtains facts from
71 established sources, and presents the information in specific formats (Hindman 1998:177). Other
72 scholars, like Meyers (2020), argue that journalism should be free from objectivity. Ruiz-Rico
73 (2020) noted that contemporary journalism emerged during the 19th century and was founded on
74 the principles of truth and reality. In contrast to the Enlightenment, Romanticism focuses on
75 individual perspectives and the self as genuine reality. The emergence of postmodernism has
76 resulted in a crisis regarding objective facts and truth, thereby contributing to the suggestion of
77 moral and epistemological relativism, which raises questions about the validity of journalism.
78 The current crisis requires both attention and comprehension and underscores the necessity for a
79 more sophisticated grasp of journalism. Miller's research supports the observation of citizen
80 journalists' roles in the publication space, including advocacy, interpretation, and representation.

81 As Miller noted, the mappings of citizen journalism require a vital interpretation of information
82 to make it usable (Prado, Paola. (2017).

83 The significance of an interpretation, whether intended for advocacy or a community, is reduced
84 because citizen journalists frequently rely on information disseminated by mainstream media,
85 except in cases like those identified by Bolette (2013). Tereszkiwicz (2006) suggested that live
86 blogs' reliance on quotes from other media sources can be seen as a beneficial approach, as it
87 enables readers to gain a more complete understanding of an event and consider multiple
88 viewpoints on that event. Studies conducted by Barnes (2012) reveal that many professionals
89 tend to be sceptical of citizen journalists, particularly when those journalists have a vested
90 interest in the issues they report on. This results in professionals stressing the significance of
91 objectivity in traditional journalism, a benchmark that they believe citizen journalists fail to
92 meet. It was contended that only professionally trained journalists could comprehend the ethical
93 guidelines for reporting (Barnes, 2012). According to Ross (2011), the history of citizen
94 journalism is essentially the history of journalism in its entirety.

95 **CITIZEN JOURNALISM AND ACCURACY**

96 Big corporation like BBC own online platforms like blogs. These blogs are called media blogs,
97 written by journalists within a media institution. They include blogs by some of the institutions
98 with highest profile and respected journalists including political editors. It is from these blogs
99 that editors write about dilemmas and issues, including contributions from other media
100 personnel. Such media blogs have specific guideline for accuracy and are easily monitored by
101 the higher authorities (Hermida, 2009). This is contrary to the individual citizen journalists.
102 These have no guidelines and operate from a personal perspective. Therefore, while the accuracy
103 aspect seems to be an issue with individual citizen journalist, this is a no problem with
104 organization online platforms. Hermida (2009) further explains that the number of institutional
105 blogs like, BBC news blogs, and the degree of contributors shows how far blogging has come if
106 corporation decide to experiment with ideas. The adoption of blogging had to overcome the
107 perceived challenge from blogs to the profession of journalism embedding accuracy in writing
108 and posting. Blogs emerged as self-published and unedited reporting, written in an interpretative
109 and subjective style, often at odds with the notion of the journalist as a professional, non-partisan
110 gatekeeper of news and information. However, this role has changed over time and allowed
111 professional journalism to take place of media organizations. Organization blogs offer a great
112 deal accuracy lesson to private citizen journalists.

113 **Citizen Journalism Credibility and reliability**

114 In communication research, the communicator's credibility has widely been suggested to
115 influence the processing of the communicated content and the change of audience attitudes and
116 beliefs (Karlsen & Aalberg, (2021). Recently, it has been suggested that, according to Metzger et
117 al. (2015), the credibility and reliability of the channel/medium of communication influences the
118 selective involvement of the audience with the medium.

119 Johnson et al. (2010) used an online poll to investigate how politically engaged Internet users in
120 the United States view blogs' legitimacy. This study focuses on how blog credibility is detested
121 of the reasons for visiting blogs. According to the survey, blogs were seen as more reliable than
122 any online or mainstream media source but as only som, but they were reputable.

123 According to Banning and Sweetser (2007), blogs were seen as more reliable by real blog users
124 than conventional news sources and even more so than any other online news source, including
125 online cable TV news, online periodicals, and online radio news. Because they are familiar with
126 blogs' goals and their writing style and do not adhere to conventional news standards like
127 impartiality, balance, and fairness (Johnson et al. (2010) seasoned Internet users assessed blogs
128 as more credible. Additionally, Internet users see blogs as trustworthy due to their independence
129 from corporate-controlled, mainstream media and the ability to openly express their opinions and
130 publish in-depth, opinionated messages. According to Yang and Lim (2009), the openness the
131 primary element influencing audience engagement with blog-mediated communications and blog
132 readers' assessments of its reliability. Citizens have the freedom to send and receive, much of the
133 information in their possession. Citizen journalists have been publishing contents that do not
134 adhere to the news values and ethical standards such as accuracy, objectivity, reliability, and
135 credibility. This has been a great challenge in the field of journalism (Manyika et al, 2011). In
136 Tanzania, little has been documented about citizen journalism content towards professional
137 journalism. Therefore, the study is geared towards understanding citizen journalism content in
138 the view of professional journalism. The research was guided by the following questions.

- 139 i. Does citizen journalism content consider news values according to professional
140 journalism standards?
 - 141 ii. Does citizen journalism's content obey the professional journalism code of ethics?
 - 142 iii. Do citizen journalists adhere to professional language in their media outlets?
- 143

144 **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

145 The study utilised three theories: Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) to analyse blog
146 usage, Gatekeeping Theory to examine news selection through journalistic principles and media
147 ethics, and Signalling Theory to assess news credibility.

148

149 **Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)**

150 The theory was first introduced by Gay et al. in 2001. Gay et al. (2001) suggest that computer-
151 mediated communication involves using networked computer systems to facilitate human
152 interaction. The computer-mediated communication theory explains how information can be
153 transmitted through various channels such as email, video conferencing, audio/video
154 conferencing, instant messaging, bulletin board systems, listserves, internet relay chat, websites,
155 blogs, and multi-user environments. Global development partners can utilise CMC to
156 collaborate and address pressing employment concerns with a significant personal impact. CMC
157 can also be leveraged to establish support groups, as Wright and Clarke (1999) suggested.
158 Computer-mediated communication theory encompasses the exchange of information via text,

159 audio, and telecommunications; it is worth noting that this theory serves as the foundation for
160 interpersonal interaction facilitated by groupware systems (Pempek et al., 2009). Thurlow et al.
161 (2004) define computer-mediated communication theory as a process whereby individuals
162 situated within specific contexts interact through computers and shape media for various
163 objectives. This theory holds particular relevance to this investigation, given that ordinary
164 citizens are currently heavily reliant on technology. Internet access is available to every citizen,
165 and devices such as computers, mobile phones, and tablets have made interactivity easier.

166
167 Using this technology, people can share any content recorded at the scene. Under CMC theory,
168 citizens exhibit a strong affinity for electronic devices capable of storing large amounts of
169 information that individuals heavily rely on. Thanks to technological advancements, numerous
170 individuals can create and disseminate stories, often accompanied by video content and captions,
171 which can be rapidly published online. The electronic devices in citizens' possession have
172 prevented any manipulation of the incident recorded on the scene. A significant number of
173 citizens are now engaging in journalistic activities, resulting in the concept of citizen journalism.
174 The researcher's framework is based on CMC theory, which they consider pertinent to this
175 research as it has enabled human interaction through technology to influence media across
176 different settings, as facilitated by computer-mediated communication. The CMC theory serves
177 as the foundation for citizen journalism, as its reliance on internet and electronic technology is a
178 fundamental component, mirroring the same dependency seen in citizen journalism.

179 **Gatekeeping Theory**

180 Lewin's gatekeeping theory was first developed in 1947 and later applied to newspaper
181 newsrooms by White in 1950. This application exposed a sequence of decision-making junctures
182 at which many news articles are obstructed at "gates," with only a limited number of them being
183 released for publication. Various individual, organisational, and extramedial factors affect
184 decisions on the value of published news or photographs. In her book "Gatekeeping," published
185 in 1991, Pamela Shoemaker introduced the Gatekeeping Theory, which suggests that
186 gatekeepers, including editors, decide which content is published or left unpublished, with these
187 choices influenced by established journalistic standards and media regulations. The theory
188 enabled the researcher to examine blogs and news articles to assess their conformity to
189 journalistic standards, as the theoretical concepts were relevant to the consequences of news
190 choice.

191 **Signaling Theory**

192 The researcher used to signal theory to compliment computer mediated theory CMC. The theory
193 was developed by Donath *et al* (1999). The theory states about online presentation and how it
194 facilitates deception on the online contents. This is because the internet has facilitated online
195 interaction for the users. Internet allows everyone to publish the content desired. The theory went
196 further to demonstrating an animal with very strong horns to be very powerful and strong to
197 support itself, compared with an animal with no strong horn. The researcher defines the animal
198 with strong horn as a professional journalist with strong and heavy training to journalism
199 standards that adhere to media codes of ethics. Since such a journalist attended heavy and strong
200 training, he/she can support himself/herself in the profession in publishing the content which

201 complies with journalism standards. Those with no strong horns are the citizen journalist who are
202 not trained thus cannot support themselves in publishing the content since their content do not
203 adhere to journalism standards. The researcher has decided to additionally use this theory
204 because it is quite relevant to the study. The study utilizes citizen journalist with no training and
205 this correlates with animals with no big defensive horns from the theory. The study will therefore
206 adopt the theory in its description.

207 **THEORETICAL LITERATURE**

208 Modern technology is the promoter and enabler of citizen journalism, suggesting technology was
209 the key to opening the door to this journalistic renaissance. The advent of the Internet has created
210 a forum through which citizen journalists thrive, and these citizen journalists are now threatening
211 professional journalists' place and position as the "kings of news." The Internet provides a forum
212 for the free flow of information and allows citizen to use simple new media tools to become a
213 source of information to an endless audience (Fernando & Sham, 2008). With the intrusion of
214 the Internet, the ability of non-journalists to publish their words and link them with those of other
215 social platform scribes has forever altered the balance of power between those who control the
216 means to publish and those who believe they have something they believe is important to say the
217 social platform has been as the playground of ordinary citizen to publish the content of their
218 interests whatever incident is the content to be published (Bowman & Willis, 2005). A unique
219 and great characteristic of the Internet is that it provides tools to influence new audiences and to
220 quickly spread important information. Because of modern technology individuals have access to
221 fairly inexpensive communication devices, such as computers, cell phones, video equipment,
222 digital cameras, and editing software. As a result, everyday citizens have the tools needed to
223 quickly and successfully share information ranging from everyday life experiences to breaking
224 news events (Johnson 2008). Mutsvairo & Columbus (2012) argued that citizen journalism is
225 emerging as a powerful phenomenon across Africa. The rise of digitally networked technologies
226 such as the internet and mobile phones is reshaping reporting across the continent. This change is
227 technological with social media platforms enabling new forms of publishing, receiving, and
228 discussing stories as well as cultural with idiosyncratic conventions emerging on these platforms.

229 Mutsvairo & Columbus (2012) survey exhibit that the ethical beliefs of citizen journalists in
230 several sub Saharan African countries are driven by a sense of social responsibility and a wish to
231 inform their readers and the general public. Citizen journalists show a clear antiauthoritarian
232 strain and an antipathy towards government regulation, yet most see themselves as subject to the
233 same ethics that guide traditional journalism. When working with content provided by the
234 citizens, the editors have to bear in mind that citizens are not educated journalists. Thus, their
235 stories might not tell the actual truth and sometimes exaggerating the whole truth the editors
236 have to verify that information from citizen if it is true and what are the dangers of using this
237 kind of content (Allan 2013). Citizen journalism has currently been normalized in our
238 information systems. This is because electronic equipment are as common as any other
239 commodity in the society. Society scene videos as well as images are found to be newsworthy to
240 the citizens as videos and images are easily captured and uploaded and shared across social
241 networking sites around the globe (Cohen et al, 2017).

242 The Internet as part and parcel of the so called new media. The internet has largely supported the
243 inversion of new form of journalism that we call it citizen journalism. We cannot go astray or
244 rebuke that the emergence of internet has made a great transformation on the atmosphere of
245 journalism (Pavlik, 2001). It is clearly that the rise of the new technology has made the concept
246 of citizen journalism more of a reality since the emergence of new technology. The evolution of
247 personal publishing offers new tools allowing Internet users to become content creators. One
248 need not to own a printing press or a broadcasting station to reach large audiences anymore. One
249 of the latest popular tools in personal publishing is the Internet-based blog. Just as the printing
250 press gave way to the mass production of pamphlets and newspapers, blogs too extend the ability
251 to communicate on the Internet beyond simple static Web pages (Trammell and Keshelashvili,
252 2005).

253 Trammell and Keshelashvili (2005) further describe that while still young, blogs have been
254 described and defined in many ways. Some define blogs by their format: frequently updated Web
255 sites containing dated entries arranged in reverse chronological order.¹ Blog genres range from
256 personal, diary-like pages to in-depth public affairs analysis. ² Blogs bear different purposes:
257 some provide description of subjectively selected links, others tell about details of a writer's day,
258 and some offer personal opinions and commentaries on the news of a day. Opinionated people,
259 called bloggers, post their thoughts, experiences, and politics, on blogs.

260 People and citizen at large have a great opportunity of disseminating and manipulating the
261 information the way they feel. Currently citizens are able to create their personal home pages
262 and share information with the universe. The view that citizen journalism have been found
263 difficult to define is true since the concept has been labelled in different ways. This includes
264 ways such as grassroots journalism, open source journalism, citizen media, participatory
265 journalism, hyper local journalism as well as bottom up journalism. The concept indicate the
266 inclusiveness that is not found in traditional journalism (Barnes, 2018).

267 **PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISM**

268 Professional journalism believes that the public is the priority to be given different information.
269 Information relies on ethical values. Professional journalism integrity is a cornerstone of
270 journalist credibility. Journalism should rely on ethics, fairly, courage in gathering, reporting and
271 interpreting information. Editors should test for accuracy, that is, information from all sources
272 should be valid and avoid errors, headlines, promotional materials like photos videos audios
273 graphics, should not misrepresent (Brown and Feng, 2011). The flourishing of user generated
274 content and blogging stimulates a debate of journalistic expertise, what is it, and where is it to be
275 found the professional framework of journalism. It is challenged and the idea of professionalism
276 is under siege in the age of amateurs and the citizen journalists. According to Media Council of
277 Tanzania (2005), journalists are professionals who operate as trustees of the public and who
278 stand accountable for their activities, society and communities. Journalists have their own ideal
279 and morality. Their expectations is that media as social institution would promote these ideals
280 and morals, the code of ethics for journalists are there to express purpose of guiding
281 professionals journalists in serving the society as required. The current state of the journalism
282 professionalism has been changed since currently, the profession has become more commercial
283 compared to previous times where by the professionalism was respected. Today, journalism is

284 fragmenting among a fascinating array of news sources and social networking sites. As well, its
285 economic model is undermined as paid advertising migrates on line.

286 **CODE OF MEDIA ETHICS**

287 Brown et al (2005) emphasize that ethical values are said to be the core value in any professional
288 journalism as one of the professional ethics is put into priority ethical journalists. Ethical
289 journalist will always have the power to publish the story content that has been edited by the
290 editors and abide with ethical standards. It is said the proper news story should be filtered like
291 water so as to get clean one for consumption. This is to say that journalists have to filter stories
292 and content at large so as to give the audience proper product that is adhering to ethical
293 standards, with the advent of technology. The online content has widely been not filtered since
294 everyone has the power to create content on blogs as well as social platforms this is the product
295 of technology being on the fingertips of every citizen.

296 Journalism is built upon different new values and not on credibility alone (Wee et al, 2009). This
297 is because professional journalists have been held accountable for their work they traditionally
298 have the responsibility to use moral reasoning when creating story, ethical standards and share
299 truth when reporting. Brown (2005) noted on accuracy that the work of professional journalists is
300 only published after it goes through the checks and balances process where the common citizen
301 journalists receive no training and such editorial advice and have no such expertise to safeguard
302 such accuracy. Professional journalists have to rely on specific codes since journalists are trained
303 professionally how to collect and process news and information for the use by mass media and
304 they should observe and defend these codes. Professional journalists have to adhere to these
305 media code of ethics; truth, accuracy, fairness, independence, moral integrity, privacy, avoid
306 harassment avoid publishing sexual photos and videos (Brown et al., 2005). Ward (2009) noted
307 that modern journalism ethics is built upon the twin pillars of truth and objectivity. Journalism
308 textbooks, associations have cited on truth and objectivity in the field of journalism. The books
309 illustrate that truth and objectivity are the fundamental principles of emerging professionalism.
310 Truth and objectivity have long roots in journalism. The heart of objectivity requires reporters to
311 provide straight unbiased information without bias opinion.

312 The publications of news and images done by citizen's journalism is currently not a new
313 phenomenon that hits newsrooms and spread at a larger pace to the audience. However,
314 technology has brought anyone with electronic equipment to organize the story at the scene and
315 uploaded accompanied with images. The stories and images have always been in vague as they
316 do not consist news values such as objectivity, concise, balanced and depict prejudice as consider
317 to professional journalists whom will manipulate the news, images and video footages as to align
318 to journalism standards (Stuart, 2017). The mode of publication has significantly reverted away
319 from the code of ethics.

320 **LANGUAGE**

321 Language is one of the crucial element in journalism. It is said, the absence of language is equal
322 to death of journalism that means without language journalism cannot exist. However, citizen

323 journalism have been using language to convey the message and information to the audience.
324 The language used has been so fast in spreading the information and easily captured in the heads
325 of people. The researches done show that the language is not proper as compared to professional
326 journalists. The citizen journalism language is manipulated with no facts, edition and sometimes
327 employ useless words that bring ambiguities. In professional journalism, the language is
328 manipulated in a manner of relying on media code of ethics (Purser et al, 2013). Citizen
329 journalism is becoming a prominent feature in journalistic landscape as video footages, mobile
330 and digital camera snapshots are found to be commonly posted online through blogs and
331 personal websites. These are ordinarily citizens on the scenes, making unique contribution and
332 challenging to the mainstream media coverage. This has been ushered by the internet technology
333 that gives a room for amateurs (Boon and Sinclair, 2009).

334 Citizen journalism has secured its place in news professionalism. Citizen journalists are
335 likely to refer on breaking news alerted by citizens in their news organizations since citizens are
336 likely to be the first eye witnesses on the scene. More often than not associated with breaking
337 news of the significant events, it includes the provision of first eye witness of citizen on the
338 scene that accounts audio recordings, video footage, mobile phone or cell phone capturing of
339 videos and images. The collection can be further shared online via blogs, personal websites as
340 well as social networking sites. The term citizen journalism can be coined as grassroots
341 journalism, open source journalism, participatory journalism, hyper local journalism (Allan,
342 2013). Today's web and the new media underpin the ability to create instant communication
343 sensations. From Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and a collection of blogs, a news statement can
344 advance from zero to 20 million viewers overnight. The viral nature of this highly social, user-
345 driven environment enables complete strangers to connect over common beliefs, desires or
346 interests and together create winners and losers (Lewis and Fabos, 2016). The mid-2000s
347 witnessed a fundamental shift in the relationship between media institutions and audiences, as
348 citizen journalism became a global phenomenon (Allan & Thorsen 2009). On the other side,
349 citizen journalism has been criticized by professional journalists because citizen journalists have
350 not been oriented toward the standards and practices of professional journalism. The language
351 citizens journalist use is questionable. It is reported that, reports from citizen journalists are
352 subjective, amateurish, inaccurate and haphazard with wrong language orientation. They
353 categorize citizen journalism as of low quality, and with inadequate language (Ellison et al.,
354 2007).

355

356 **EMPIRICAL LITERATURE**

357 Towner and Munoz (2011) argue that professional journalists only faced with fierce competition
358 from rival Tv stations or newspapers. Currently, citizen journalism is posing a great threat to
359 professional journalism. Journalists are not entirely wiped out in online world but they are
360 eroded and most important they cannot be confined any longer to an exclusive elite group.
361 Journalists have no longer the exclusive right of authority and ability to disseminate information
362 to the masses. This is because members of the public have the power to determine the news and
363 information they will consume. Bibuli (2014) has exhibited that creating and replicating
364 knowledge is important for sustainable development. Only a few years back the fax was a great

365 addition to a limited collection of communication tools. Today technology has evolved to give us
366 emails, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Myspace and Whatsapp among others. The internet has
367 enabled a range of new platforms for personal and social interactions particularly through social
368 media. Current examples of social media platforms include social networking sites like
369 Facebook, photo sharing sites like Flickr, video sharing sites like YouTube, business networking
370 sites like LinkedIn, micro blogging sites like Twitter, and numerous others. Social media sites
371 are inexpensive and, more often than not, completely free to use. Social media allow users to
372 interact, to share content, and to create content collectively (Bibuli, 2014). In Uganda for
373 example, social media use has grown by leaps and bounds largely due to the growth in internet
374 penetration which now stands at 15 % of the country's population of 35 million people. It adds
375 that many users access internet (social media) on their phones with service providers such as
376 MTN (with the largest number of subscribers) and Orange Telecom offering their subscribers
377 free access to social networking site Facebook (Bibuli, 2014).

378 Dare et al (2011) continues to explain that the making of the news is no longer exclusive
379 to professional journalists and a legion of newsmakers and public relations people. In the last
380 decade, traditional journalism has been in serious competition for relevance. Legacy media
381 continues to struggle to secure its turf as the authoritative voice and the manager and processor
382 of news in the face of citizen journalism. The audience, aided by internet technology which has
383 made the online communicative experience possible, is no longer a passive receiver of news, but
384 also an active creator of content, altering the face of journalism from being a lecture to a
385 conversation. It is now common practice for media outlets like the BBC to feature blogs on their
386 websites to allow the flow of stories across numerous modalities. They have also embraced
387 social media by inviting readers, listeners or viewers to follow their activities on Facebook or
388 Twitter. These platforms are used to make readers aware of the news content in the publications.
389 They also provide real time updates on unfolding events in the region (Onyango, 2013).

390 Social media has also helped citizens and media actors to circumvent state control,
391 interference and intimidation that is rife as observed. Reports show that the banning, harassment
392 and intimidation of the press and closure of media houses has greatly infringed freedom of
393 expression (Kokenge, 2010). Non-media players such as Civil Society have emerged to
394 disseminate information and fill the void left by traditional media and are doing so with great
395 effect. In Africa, Parliamentary Watch a Civil Society entity has mainly used social media
396 platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to provide information on parliamentary processes and
397 increasing the transparency, responsiveness, and accountability of the parliament. This entity has
398 become the undisputed source of news on parliamentary activities and information from its
399 platforms in that information from its accounts is picked up by the major news agencies in the
400 country (Towner and Munoz, 2011).

401 Onyango (2013) argues that the technology has made citizen journalism more accessible
402 to people worldwide due to technology. Citizens are able to report different issues faster and
403 quicker than traditional media regardless on ethical standards observed by journalism profession.
404 Online content have become a key part of social, economic and cultural life in many societies.
405 With today's technology, blogs, chat rooms, message boards, wikis, Facebook, Twitter and
406 mobile telephones, the citizen have found new life as the average person can capture news and
407 distribute the content globally. The use of mobile telephones provides low-cost option for people

408 to set up news content and publish online via social network platform such as blogs. Kokenge
409 (2010) argued that in 2007, with its coverage of Myanmar's governmental crackdown on
410 protesting Buddhist monks, the BBC put citizen journalism to brilliant use in the midst of that
411 repressive regime's attempt at a comprehensive media blackout. The broadcast giant combed
412 through the thousands of photos, text messages and blog entries that escaped the blackout via the
413 Internet and incorporated these messages and images into its news reports. These images and
414 messages came not from professional journalists but from citizens living and working in
415 Myanmar.

416 Social media users like newspaper readers know as that all newspapers are at times
417 inaccurate or else select, interpret, and at times distort the events they report. Some newspapers
418 like social media will publish what amounts to little more than barefaced lies. However despite
419 this challenge, social media enables access to knowledge and provides and creates fresh
420 opportunities for organizations, communities and individuals (Bibuli, 2014). However, this fact
421 is still under debate and conclusion have not yet been made. Kokenge (2010) states that citizen
422 journalism is there to serve the public surroundings since the newspaper continue to die away
423 and more people migrate their media consumption to the internet. Media professionals will be
424 increasingly faced with this new type of citizen-generated content.

425 **Research Methods**

426 The researcher employed a descriptive research design grounded in qualitative methodology, as
427 Kothari and Garg (2023). This design facilitated the description of the phenomenon of citizen
428 journalism following data collection. As noted by Berger (2020), a qualitative research approach
429 was used due to its ability to provide a clear and direct description of experiences, perceptions, or
430 events through language derived from the collected data. This study specifically focused on
431 citizen journalism content in the 100 blog accounts. A sample size of 10 was drawn from 100
432 registered news blogs, namely: The study's results indicate that all 10 blogs attempt to conform
433 to established news values Lukaza Blog News - josephatlukaza.blogspot.com; Arusha Yetu
434 News - yetuarusha.blogspot.com, Malunde blog news- malunde.com/2025/01/blog-
435 post_945.html; Bukoba blog News- bukoba-wadau.com/ - well organized; Mwaipaya Blog News
436 - abdallahmwaipaya.blogspot.com/; Kitoto News- kitoto.wordpress.com; Mroki Kidevu News -
437 mrokim.blogspot.com; Mtaa News- mtaakwamtaa.co.tz - well organized. Harakati News -
438 harakati360.blogspot.com, The habari-thehabari.commalunde.com/2025/01/blog-post_945.html

439

440 The study used purposive to select five respondents for interviews. This sampling aligns with the
441 recommendations of Bekele et al. (2022) and Wasihun and Creswell (1998), which are widely
442 accepted in the field, suggesting that a range of 5 to 25 interviews is sufficient for a
443 phenomenological study. The research was conducted using purposive sampling, a method that
444 allowed the researchers to maintain control over the selection process based on criteria aligned
445 with the study's objectives (Wimmer & Dominick, 2014). The researchers used this method to

446 select news bloggers and TRCA officers as important informants, ensuring the study's results
447 were both accurate and relevant (Kothari & Garg, 2023). This method allowed the researcher to
448 examine the content of certain citizen journalist media blogs. The use of purposive research
449 sampling mitigates the inclusion of extraneous and irrelevant elements in the sample by chance,
450 while facilitating an in-depth examination of the chosen items (Patton et al., 2002).

451 The researcher used content analysis (Krippendorff, 2019) to scrutinise textual, audio, and video
452 materials to determine whether bloggers adhered to journalistic standards and ethical codes. The
453 researcher used content analysis techniques, as shown by Webb Lynne (2013) and Krippendorff
454 (2019, 2022), to analyse news published on ten blogs to assess if the bloggers regard news value
455 and ethics. The researcher analysed audio, video, and all text content uploaded throughout the 10
456 blogs to discern patterns and conduct a thorough study (Webb, Lynne, 2013). The research
457 included in-depth interviews to gather information from existing bloggers and TCRA officers
458 about the news value and ethics of blogging, adding a robust and reliable source of data. This
459 strategy accurately evaluated the professional practices of bloggers in both emerging and
460 traditional media.

461 **DATA ANALYSIS**

462 The research adhered to the comprehensive guidelines established by Croucher and Cronn-Mills
463 (2024), which detail the essential procedures for thematic analysis, including the identification of
464 key themes and patterns. By employing this robust approach, the researcher effectively
465 illuminates the intricate relationships and trends emerging from the entire data collection
466 process. This thorough examination of individuals' experiences, perspectives, emotions, and
467 knowledge allows for a deeper understanding of the subject matter identifying themes and
468 patterns. This approach allows the researcher to elucidate the patterns and correlations
469 throughout the whole data collection. The researchers examined individuals' experiences, views,
470 feelings, and knowledge. The researcher synthesised and correlated the data with the research
471 questions, demonstrating the analysis's substantial contribution to the aims. The researcher
472 conducted a qualitative study of data by identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns and
473 themes in the information generated by citizen journalists. The description was presented in word
474 and sentence styles. The content analysis technique is a practical study approach for delineating
475 communication messages and quantifying message properties. These attributes include
476 correctness, objectivity, credibility, and dependability. As a qualitative research data collection
477 instrument, it conveys the significance of the topic or material of interest to the researcher
478 (Maggio et al., 2012). The research's compliance with all aspects is crucial to ensure
479 scientifically credible findings.

480

481 **Findings and Discussion**

482 **Does Citizen Journalism Content Consider News Values According to Professional** 483 **Journalism Standards?**

484 The findings indicate that all blogs present news with accuracy. There are no misspellings, and
485 the words are composed with competence and fluency, considering journalistic skills. About the
486 credibility, the findings of the study indicate that the majority of news across various blogs
487 consider proper sourcing or a designated spokesperson. However, certain news items are
488 reproduced from other sources without proper attribution. Most of blogs pasted a copy of
489 mainstream newspapers. Although pasting of newspapers seems as lack of credibility in old
490 media, the majority of comments on blogs appreciated the bloggers effort to provide news from
491 variate sourced.

492 Regarding the objectivity, research indicates that many blogs considered objectivity. The
493 findings indicated that the street to street new- mtaakwamtaa.co.tz and Bukoba Stockholders
494 Blog bukoba-wadau.com are well organized. All stories are well cited and balanced. The
495 bloggers provided link to You Tube to enable readers to watch and listen audio (Sources Voices).
496 The style enhanced the reliability and objective. The rest of globs have few brief stories which
497 lack fairness and follow up which result to lack of objectivity. The findings revealed that lack of
498 second part of story caused followers to discuss the story in detailes whereby some reader's
499 information which cannot considered as official information from second side of the story.
500 The findings are consistent with the research by Cristol (2002) and Kurtz (2002), which
501 demonstrates that bloggers and traditional journalists discuss the degree of trust that should be
502 attributed to information shared via blogs. The findings corroborate the research of Banning and
503 Trammell (2006) and Johnson and Kaye (2004), which indicates that although bloggers
504 frequently articulate strong opinions and critique prominent figures with whom they disagree,
505 blog users persist in trusting and depending on the information provided in blogs. The
506 perceptions of credibility empower blogs to unite followers and facilitate social change.

507 The findings about reliability reveal that the information sources utilised in blogs are frequently
508 reliable. Majority of stories published to all examined blogs have reliable sources. However,
509 some stories published in Harakati Blog- harakati360.blogspot.com, Malunde Blog -
510 malunde.com/2025/01/blog-post_945.html and thehabari.com/ missed some clear sources and
511 date the information released as they missed when and where, hence reduced credibility if the
512 particular stories. The findings is similary to the study of Professional journalists have to adhere
513 to these media code of ethics; truth, accuracy, fairness, independence, moral integrity, privacy,
514 avoid harassment avoid publishing sexual photos and videos (Brown et al., 2005).

515 **Does citizen journalism's content obey the professional journalism code of ethics?**

516 The findings revealed that all blogs examined violated media codes of ethics regarding news core
517 values. The study's results indicate that blogs conform to journalistic ethics. A significant
518 proportion of narratives are constructed according to the 5W+H framework in value-based
519 ethics. In instances where shocking news, such as accidents or distressing events, is expected,
520 there is instead a focus on caution regarding images and videos, reassuring the audience about
521 the responsible reporting in blogs. They emphasize equality by avoiding gender discrimination
522 and the marginalisation of vulnerable groups within society. Additionally, they disseminate
523 information to the public in contentious developments and oversee news coverage by

524 accommodating both perspectives. The findings implied contrasts with the notion that blogs
525 deliver news without applying journalistic skills and ethical standards. The findings are
526 consistent with the study conducted by Barnes (2012), which found that only professionally
527 trained journalists can comprehend the ethics required for reporters. Ross (2011) posits that the
528 history of citizen journalism is, in fact, the history of journalism itself.

529

530 **Do citizen journalists adhere to professional language in their media outlets?**

531

532 The findings indicated that regarding language, all blogs focus on journalists' skills in news
533 stories, especially those produced by government officials. However, in advertisements, bloggers
534 used two different languages in one sentence: Swahili and English in one sentence. For example,
535 in Harakati Blog- harakati360.blogspot.com, the main information blogs were written in English;
536 many news stories are written well using Swahili language; in the narrative fiction
537 stories, almost all blogs use Swahili spoken language. It's worth noting that Ku, Liang, and Chen
538 (2006) share the same views about citizen journalists' language, emphasizing the consensus in
539 the field. They agree that news articles own a larger vocabulary than blog articles, which means
540 that news articles use professional language and professionally convey their messages to
541 respective audiences.

542 On the other hand, blog sports articles, due to their lack of a professional vocabulary, often find
543 themselves in a struggle to effectively communicate with the audience. The use of two languages
544 (English and Kiswahili) can lead to a sense of unprofessionalism in journalism, highlighting the
545 challenges faced by these blogs. The researcher conducted interviews with four bloggers and a
546 key informant from TCRA to obtain information on bloggers' adherence to journalistic standards
547 and ethics. A member of the Content Committee of the Tanzania Communications Regulatory
548 Authority (TCRA-CC) said the committee noticed that numerous bloggers missed registering or
549 had their permits revoked for violating journalistic standards, which led them to pursue a
550 journalism course. He added:

551 TCRA aims to promote effective governance by ensuring that individuals can
552 access information freely and that bloggers can gather and disseminate
553 information. However, it's crucial that such material is presented following
554 journalism's standards and moral principles. As our country is still in its early
555 stages of social-economic development, we do not allow the creation of
556 platforms that could mislead the public.

557 He states that TCRA diligently monitors blogs and other electronic media platforms to guarantee
558 that the material disseminated is accurate, unbiased, and conforms to journalistic standards and
559 Tanzanian cultural principles.

560 Participant #1 stated that following the block of his blog, he enrolled in a journalism course after
561 his blogging experience profoundly impacted his reporting style. This positive transformation,

562 guided by the strong influence of ethical guidelines and legal procedures, allowed him to deliver
563 reports on local occurrences with a sense of integrity and precision. His journey is a testament to
564 the potential growth and improvement that journalism education can bring, instilling optimism
565 and hope in aspiring journalists.

566
567

568 Participant #2 said he had hired professional editors to edit the news from his blogs. Since then,
569 he has become a major player in the news industry, increasing his readership, blog audiences and
570 receiving much advertising.

571

572 she stated:

573 In the modern media landscape, bloggers have evolved from citizen journalists to
574 fully-fledged professional journalists. Our publication provides trustworthy reporting,
575 and its coverage is broader than that of traditional media outlets, which lack the same
576 freedom to use multiple platforms as social media writers.

577

578 Participants # 3 and #4 said they had advanced journalism education, so they decided to start
579 their businesses and hire their colleagues, who also had the opportunity to practice journalism by
580 writing investigative news and stories about rural development.

581

582 Participants # 3 added, in rural areas, blogs have become the primary news source due to the old
583 media's focus on urban centres, prioritising coverage of negative topics, including
584 mismanagement of funds, criminal activity, and accidents, primarily to boost selling.
585 Consequently, bloggers adhere to journalistic ethics as blogs satisfy the informational needs of
586 Tanzanians residing in rural regions. Rural dwellers have been marginalised in development due
587 to the absence of media that chronicles rural progress and offers citizens educational information
588 that fosters development.

589

590 Tanzanian bloggers have formed their own association, to seek funds and sponsors for training,
591 exchange experiences and make blogs a powerful pillar in the news sector. This study is similar
592 to the research done by Brown (2005), who noted accurately that the work of professional
593 journalists is only published after it goes through the checks and balances process, where the
594 ordinary citizen journalists receive no training and editorial advice and have no such expertise to
595 safeguard such accuracy. This indicates that citizen journalism neglects professional journalists'
596 principles and ethics. However, the study is consistent with the studies of Fernando and Sham
597 (2008) and Johnson (2008). Mutsvairo and Columbus (2012) suggested that blogs and social
598 media have emerged as alternatives to traditional media. This study supports the gatekeeping
599 theory, which helps journalists maintain ethical standards. This study substantiates the computer-
600 mediated theory, indicating that technological advancements have facilitated information access
601 for rural residents via blogs as alternative media. This study supports Onyango (2013),
602 technology has increased the accessibility of citizen journalism worldwide and has made online
603 content a vital component of social, economic, and cultural life in many societies.

604

605 **Conclusion**

606 Studies have concluded that Tanzanian blogs adhere to the same journalistic principles and
607 ethical standards as traditional media outlets. The findings indicated that most news bloggers
608 work as mainstream because they are monitored by TCRA, which bans any blog that violates the
609 law. In response to the ban, bloggers have undertaken journalism courses and operated their
610 blogs professionally, effectively serving as alternative reliable media for Tanzanians.
611 Blogs operate distinctly by utilizing information from various media or other blogs, a practice
612 not permitted in mainstream media. This unique approach, which allows for a diverse range of
613 sources, significantly enhances the reliability of blogs compared to traditional media, and keeps
614 the audience informed and enlightened. Blogs also frequently connect to other social media
615 platforms, including YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram, allowing readers to discuss and
616 comment on related topics.

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